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MEANINGS OF TERMS
ON TEXTILE LABELS

At the same time that manufacturers are complying with the widespread demand for more information to accompany fabrics for garments and household uses, or on ready-made textile articles, it is necessary for the housewife to learn the meaning of a number of new terms. Otherwise the information carried on the labels she reads will not tell her what she wants to know.

Some of the special terms used have changed their meanings in the course of years. For example, we used to think of "broadcloth" as a smooth, somewhat shiny, close-woven fabric for coats and dress suits. While this kind of broadcloth is still made and widely used, there is also cotton and silk broadcloth, and at present cotton broadcloth is the only one that carries a label. This plain-woven mercerized fabric is popular for men's shirts and women's dresses and various household uses.

"Lisle" was originally a fine, hard linen thread made in Lisle, (now Lille), France. Now the term is applied to a smooth cotton yarn made from long staple cotton, tightly twisted and treated to remove the projecting surface fibers.

A "mercerized" cotton yarn or fabric has been treated by a special process known as mercerization for the purpose of increasing its gloss and strength. This is quite different from "sizing", which is often called "filling" or "loading" and is a method of finishing a cotton or linen

fabric to add weight and improve the finish or feel by applying a starch mixture or some other adhesive substance. Most sizings rub out eventually or come out in laundering, but a mercerized finish is permanent.

Many recent textile labels carry such technical terms as "breaking strength", "thread count", "tape selvage", "run-of-the-mill", "ply yarn", and others. These refer to the way the material is constructed and are usually given to emphasize durability. "Breaking strength" is the number of pounds required to break the threads of a sample under definite test conditions. Facts about the breaking strength must be compared with similar information on a similar article or the buyer will have little to go on for comparison. The greater the resistance of the fabric, the more durable it is likely to be. "Thread count" is self-explanatory. The more threads to the inch, both crosswise and lengthwise, the closer and finer the weave.

A "tape selvage" is made by a special loom attachment to reinforce the edge of woven fabrics, such as sheeting, hence is an indication of durability. It is frequently made of "ply yarns", which are yarns made by twisting two or more single yarns together.

"Firsts", "seconds", "thirds", and "run-of-the mill" are grade terms used in the order given when the manufacturer inspects textile merchandise at the mill. Standards vary from mill to mill and a certain defect may cause rejection in one mill but not in another.

These are but a few out of more than a hundred trade terms used by textile manufacturers and recently compiled by Margaret B. Hays of the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.